

## RECENT LITERATURE.

Mrs. Wright's 'The Friendship of Nature.'—Although not a 'bird book' in a strictly ornithological sense, Mrs. Wright's 'The Friendship of Nature'<sup>1</sup>, as its subtitle—'A New England Chronicle of Birds and Flowers'—indicates, deals with birds to a sufficient extent to warrant reference to her charming book in the pages of 'The Auk.' If no new facts in bird life are 'chronicled,' her frequent allusions to birds have a poetic setting and a background that render her book one of unusual literary merit and peculiarly fascinating to every lover of nature. The book consists of eleven chapters, nearly all for the first time here published. Some hint of the method of treatment may be gathered from the titles as follows: 'A New England May-Day'; 'When Orchards Bloom'; 'The Romaunt of the Rose'; 'The Garden of the Sea'; 'A Song of Summer'; 'Feathered Philosophers'; 'Nature's Calm'; 'The Story of a Garden'; 'Rustling Wings'; 'The Loom of Autumn'; 'A Winter Mood.'

The author easily takes first rank as a poet of nature, her book being truly a poem in prose. In general her allusions to the varied objects of nature, whether animals or plants, or things inanimate, are wonderfully truthful and show not only keen powers of observation but broad culture. The twelve illustrations are most happily chosen and exceedingly well reproduced in photogravure.<sup>2</sup> We consider that we do our readers a favor in calling attention to the intellectual treat the book offers to those in friendship with nature.—J. A. A.

Shufeldt's 'Comparative Oölogy of North American Birds.'<sup>3</sup>—In a paper of somewhat over 30 pages, Dr. Shufeldt attempts "to bring together what is already well known in regard to the oölogy of North American birds, placing it before the ornithologist in a more condensed form than it is usually given and in a comparative way." Much of this is 'placed' in the form of comparative tables, compiled mainly from Coues's 'Key' and Ridgway's 'Manual.' Much stress is here and there laid upon the "discrepancies" found in the descriptions of different authors

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<sup>1</sup> The Friendship | of Nature | A New England Chronicle of Birds | and Flowers | By | Mabel Osgood Wright | With Twelve Full-page Illustrations | from Photographs by the Author | New York | Macmillan and Company | and London | 1894 | All rights reserved.—8vo. pp. viii + 238. 12 photogravure illustrations.

<sup>2</sup> The work appears, however, in two editions, the smaller in ordinary 12mo. size, with merely a frontispiece. The larger, or 'large paper' edition, is limited, we believe, to 300 numbered copies.

<sup>3</sup> Comparative Oölogy of North American Birds. By R. W. Shufeldt. Rep. U. S. Nat. Mus. for 1892 (1894), pp. 461-493.

in respect to the number, size, color, and markings of the eggs of the same species of birds. In only rare cases, however, do the discrepancies seem to be important, considering the purposely general character of the statements referred to, and the variability in all these features the eggs of the same species are so well known to present.

In these comparative tables and the accompanying text, we have a convenient summary of the subject, without any claim to the presentation of any new facts, or rarely any new generalizations. In the matter of the latter, and in the way of general statements respecting the character of the eggs and the nesting habits of many of the higher groups, quotations are freely made from the writings of Professor Newton and Dr. Sharpe.

Very little attempt is made to use the facts of oölogy in a taxonomic sense, beyond what has been done by previous authors, where in a few cases, as pointed out by Newton, they may be employed to advantage. Yet the fact remains that birds of certain groups, as genera or families, in all other respects closely related, vary greatly as to the number, shape, and coloration of their eggs, and in nesting habits. We have here, however, apparently an expression of our author's latest views on the classification of birds, as respects the affinities of certain ordinal or sub-ordinal groups, as we find the Owls (*Striges*) dissociated from the other Birds of Prey and placed between the Woodpeckers and Goatsuckers; the Hummingbirds stand between the Goatsuckers and the Swifts; and the families of the *Passeres* are very much transposed from their usual order, the Finches (family *Fringillidæ*) following the *Paridæ*, while next in order stand the *Icteridæ*, *Corvidæ*, and *Sturnidæ*, the latter closing the series of *Passerine* birds. We have no doubt, however, that the placing of the "so-called 'grosbeaks'" (p. 484) under the *Icteridæ* is a typographical mishap, as the paper contains at various other points evidence of careless proofreading.

Near the close of the paper we have various quotations from Newton, of some general statements about birds' eggs, particularly as to the manner of deposition of the shell-markings, which are, however, not quite in accord with Dr. Gadow's recent statements on the same subject (see Newton's *Dictionary of Birds*, Art. 'Embryology,' pp. 197, 198). We have again a restatement, in substance, of Wallace's well-known ideas, especially as elaborated by Dixon, respecting the coloration of birds' eggs in relation to the color of the birds themselves and the character of the nest in which the eggs are placed; and, under 'Concluding Remarks' (pp. 487-493), an attempt to correlate "some of the oölogical peculiarities of the birds of North America" with these generalizations. The concluding paragraph of the paper is devoted to suggestions as to how to study and describe the eggs and nesting habits of birds, which, like the paper as a whole, scarcely rise above the plane of the common place, being designed perhaps rather for the beginner than for the advanced investigator.—J. A. A.